

# Prophetic Horns – Their Glory and Their Curse

In Biblical times the imagery of that agrarian life was portrayed through shepherds, farmers, crops, animals and harvest. Many of the great parables and teaching symbols in the Word draw from the folklore, imagery, life and customs of those ancient civilizations.

Prophecy frequently builds on animate symbols, even relating to anatomic parts of the creature. More astounding are sacred metaphors drawn from creature virtue, such as Jesus being the **Lamb of God** (John 1:29, 36). Can you grasp such a contrast! The highest Being in all the universe identifying His divine Partner as a “Son” and then a Lamb! In such imagery we can more clearly grasp His humiliation and utter submissiveness. A marvelous lesson of love’s deepest meaning is conveyed in such Divine degrading imagery. Fascinating is the continuum of such contrast with Jesus identifying with the human race forever. That was God’s gift to make possible degraded creature humanity into divine likeness!

The Lamb, in prophetic imagery, is seen also with seven eyes and **seven horns** (Revelation 5:6). The Bible notes that the seven eyes are the seven Spirits of God, which we were told resided before the throne of God (Revelation 1:4). That represents the full expression of God’s Spirit, which will come with the Latter Rain, and is associated with the whole book of Revelation. Those seven horns, a complete number, also expressing the fullness of something most wonderful. And that begins our study into prophetic horns.

## A Wonderful Message in the Horns

The word *qeren* or Horn is a distinct symbol that represents “power” (I Kings 22:11, Zechariah 1:18-21).[1]

Speaking of the blessings of the twelve tribes and then specifically that of Joseph, Moses noted that he was like a majestic bull (an important agricultural animal to the Jews), and then noted: *“His horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall push the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth”* (Deuteronomy 33:7 – RSV). His world power was represented by the horns of an ox.

When Israel apostatized, Solomon noted: *“He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about”* (Lamentations 2:3).

The **glory** and **strength** of Israel was broken. Then in restoration language: *“In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the LORD”* (Ezekiel 29:21). Its strength and favor would be returned as its “horn” begins to grow.

One of the first pictures of horns comes in Genesis from the beautiful story of Abraham and Isaac on Mt. Moriah.

“With a breaking heart and unnerved hand, he takes the fire, while Isaac inquires: Father, here is the fire and the wood; but where is the offering? But, oh, Abraham cannot tell him now! Father and son build the altar, and the terrible moment comes for Abraham to make known to Isaac that which has agonized his soul all that long journey, that Isaac himself is the victim. Isaac is not a lad; he is a full-grown young man. He could have refused to submit to his father's design had he chosen to do so. He does not accuse his father of insanity, nor does he even seek to change his purpose. He submits. He believes in the love of his father and that he would not make this terrible sacrifice of his only son if God had not bidden him do so. Isaac is bound by the trembling, loving hands of his pitying father because God has said it. The son submits to the sacrifice because he believes in the integrity of his father. But when everything is ready, when the faith of the father and the submission of the son are fully tested, the angel of God stays the uplifted hand of Abraham that is about to slay his son and tells him that it is enough. ‘Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.’”[2]

Then the record says: *“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket **by his horns**: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son”* (Genesis 22:13).

The phrase “lifted up his eyes” is a prophetic allusion to the advent of Jesus. Many writers consider it eschatologic. Intriguingly, Daniel also says I “lifted up mine eyes” (8:3) – and what did he see? A ram with two horns.

The ram that Abraham saw was **caught** in a thicket by **its horns**. That ram was symbolic of the “Lamb of God,” the “Ram of God.” It submitted to the limitations of this world, the “thicket,” its brambles. It became submissive to the Cross. He permitted the horns of His might and power to be caught in the briars of earth. Because of that, new imagery came: *“And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and **the horn of my salvation**, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence”* (II Samuel 22:2-3).

Christ not only is the “rock” of ages but He has become the “horn” of glory and power of for man’s salvation! All this was possible through the limitation of His “horn” power submitting to earthly forces.

There’s much more to this story. In Daniel’s vision of the Ram, he witnessed two distinct phases of its kingdom power: (1) It was simply standing by the Ulai River and (2) it was charging from the east throughout the world.

When it was standing by that river of the far east, he noted the growth of the two horns. The greater one came up last. This is highly significant for our understanding of end-time prophecy. That Ram is Jesus and those two horns gave Him glory and power at the end (Daniel 8:17 and 19 tell us it is to be fulfilled at the “appointed time,” at the “time of the end”!)

What gives God glory and Jesus honor at the very end of earth’s history? The 144,000 (the smaller horn) and the great multitude (the greater horn), which comes up last.

In a prophetic metaphor, God had noted long before that “the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up” (Psalm 75:10).

## The Evil Horns

Not all horns are to God's glory and honor. God chastised Judah for rising to power by its own strength: "*Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?*" (Amos 6:13b).

In stunning imagery, the four key kingdoms that would enter the prophetic scene – literally and spiritually – are portrayed in Daniel 7: the lion (Babylon), bear (Medo-Persia) and leopard (Greece) did not have horns. But the fourth beast had ten horns – a number suggesting a "full complement." That beast, Daniel muses, was "dreadful and terrible." It was actually during a second related vision when Daniel saw the details of this terrible scene (7:7).

- Then he said, "I considered the horns" (7:8).
- That's interesting – they were important and held a message.
- These were ten kings/kingdoms (7:24).
- Then a "little horn" was observed "coming up."
- That was an evil horn or power.
- It had a mouth which blasphemed God (7:8, 25).
- Similar language is used in another "little horn" imagery in 8:9-12.
- Parallel antichrist hatred is also found in the woman and the beast (Revelation 17) and from the sea beast (Revelation 13).

Who is that evil "little horn" that prophecy says would become great? When we put all the parallel prophecies together, it is a religious power, centered in Rome that will exercise belligerent behavior for three and a half years at the end. God said: "All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off" (Psalm 75:10a). Daniel says of that horn power:

- The judgment will "take away his dominion" (7:26).
- "He shall be broken without hand" (8:25c).

Later, referring to the same power, calling it then the "king of the north"! – "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him" (11:45b).

Perhaps the most grotesque and fearful wicked horns in prophecy were seen by John the Revelator. He had just seen a beautiful woman dressed in white with her sparkling twelve-starred crown when horror of horrors, he is visually thrust into this picture:

- "*And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born*" (Revelation 12:3-4).
- We don't know how long it took from the vision to the writing, but he made sure we knew it was...
- "*that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world*" (Revelation 12:9).

Those ten horns are the same as those in Revelation 17 (without crowns) and then Revelation 13 (with crowns). They are ten world kingdom powers that give Satan significance right at the end. There is a hopeful sequel to that hateful dragon:

- *“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever”* (Revelation 20:10).
- With the dragon goes the end-time supporting horns – powers – nations – of Satan’s minions.

### The Four Horns

In fascinating language, the Grecian horn, considered historically as Alexander the Great, was broken (“the great horn was broken” – Daniel 8:8). Four horns took its place (“four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.” – Daniel 8:8; cf. Daniel 8:21-22). Historically, those four horns were the four generals who commanded four different parts of what had been the “Greek empire” after Alexander’s death.

But Daniel 8 is end-time. It is written in incredible symbolic language directed at God’s final generation of people. In demanding imagery we are asked to understand its meaning of when the information is unsealed. Amazing as it is, that sealed portion is now the unsealed (ready to be understood) little open book of Revelation 10!<sup>[3]</sup>

What then are those four end-time horns that support Satan – the “rough he-goat”? They give prestige and might to Satan. They are represented by the false trinity (dragon, sea beast and the false prophet), plus the king of the south in Daniel 11. Those wicked horns come to their end (Daniel 11:40-41, Revelation 16:19).

- *“Then **lifted I up mine eyes** [eschatologic], and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the LORD showed me four carpenters [Skilled workmen. Four powers which will help neutralize the work of Satan’s agency at the end]. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray [fight] them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it”* (Zechariah 1:18-21).
- Those evil horns affected God’s people – His church. They are tied to the four angels bound to the river Euphrates (apostate people supporting Babylon).
- But there will be four “smiths” or repairers who will come with a mission to restore what they damaged.

Those “horns of restoring power” are symbolized by the four horns on the golden altar of incense. They represented the glory and redemptive work from the center of sweet smelling incense that point to the four corners of the earth.

- Those horns were a symbol of hope and mercy.
- When the blood was applied each day to them, it unfolded a metaphor of atonement rescue that would come in its fullest when the blood of the Lamb of God would be shed (Exodus 30:10, Leviticus 4:7).

- Those horns were known for their safety, their ability to save (I Kings 1:5-6, 53; 2:28, 34).

In end-time imagery they represent the four angels who bring the final message of mercy and hope to a dying world (Revelation 14 and 18). The blood of the Lamb Jesus has now been shed, once and for all (Hebrews 9:12). The prayers of the saints are centered at that symbolic altar. In final imagery of prayers and the golden altar, John depicts extra incense, refining our earthly pleas before the throne (Revelation 8:3-4). Then – sealing and judgment (8:5).

### The Horn of Our Salvation

On each of the four horns of the **Brass Altar of Burnt Offering** blood was placed as a final step in the atonement ritual (Leviticus 16:18) as had occurred on the horns of the Altar of Incense (Exodus 30:10, Leviticus 4:7). Why the horns? They also symbolized the Savior's redeeming power.

- *“The LORD ... is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence”* (II Samuel 22:2-3).
- *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David”* (Luke 1:68-69, 2:11).

On the **Altar of Incense** those four horns (*qeren*) are located at each corner (Exodus 30:1-10, 37:25). They were covered with the same gold as the altar was. That piece of furniture was sacred – holy.

- The final message to all the world (represented by the “four” angels), under Christ's power and righteousness, is reaching out to every man and woman in earth's final warning.
- They point outward.
- The mercy of Christ, emanating from that sacrificial blood, extends outward and upward.
- The four directions were commonly referred to by the Jewish people – as “to all the world.”
- “Toward the four winds of heaven” (Daniel 18:8c)
- cf. “Four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth” (Revelation 7:1).

The martyred saints cry out from the base of that Altar of Incense, “How long?” (Revelation 6:9). The imagery of crescendoing and intense prayers at this altar is then noted (Revelation 8:3). This is followed by coals being thrown to the earth, drawing redemptive work to a close (Revelation 8:5) and in answer to that cry. Sequentially, an unusual voice comes from between the horns of the Altar of Incense to “Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates” (Revelation 9:14). Probation is now closed. These are Satan's “four angels” to bring havoc on the earth. Then the time comes for God to act in a last judicial move when an angel from the altar tells Jesus, holding the sickle, “it is time for the harvest.”

- The horns of that altar symbolize the final outreach of the gospel to all the world, under the power of heaven.

- From its center comes the incense of Christ's righteousness that joins with the saints' prayers to be a sweet odor acceptable to God.
- When that plea ceases, a voice comes to "release" those four leaders of Satan.

In Trumpet five his minions were released out of the abyss; but they couldn't kill. Now that restriction is lifted and they kill one third of earth's inhabitants (sixth Trumpet).

The horns had power to save. When mercy ceased the ministry of the horns came to an end. Then the power of Satan comes out to destroy all parts of the earth. Horns tell a story. They reveal an amazing aspect of the war between good and evil. In the end, one horn will be broken, leading to desolation. One will remain as man's eternal Defense, leading to his salvation. What then do the seven horns of the Lamb of God mean in Revelation 5? The Lamb is still bleeding. Thus, mercy still pleads. The full outpouring of the Spirit is flooding the earth. The seven horns symbolize the unbridled power, in military imagery, that accompanies God's final work. Stunning is our Lamb, seen as a leader (first, depicted as the Ram coming across the earth in Daniel 8) and then as a lamb still bleeding His blood in Revelation. The Lamb, the horns, the eyes, the blood all describes earth's final scene when Satan's power ceases and Christ's horn of power takes its eternal universal place.

#### References:

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